



2007 Farm Bill Forum

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**Comments of Linda Stone
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Farm Bill Forum
November 3, 2005**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. The Children's Alliance is a membership-based, multi-issue child advocacy organization. I have been working to end hunger in Washington State since 1986. I am going to restrict my comments today to the Food Stamp Program, or as we call it in Washington State, the Basic Food Program.

Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- **National** program – as seen with Katrina;
- **Responsive** to economic change due to entitlement structure;
- Puts resources into hands of hungry then right into **local economies** with a significant multiplier impact;
- Shown to improve **nutritional intake** in low-income families.

Weaknesses:

- Provides **too little and often too late** – asset limits;
- Benefits are **not high enough to consistently support a nutritional diet**;
- Even after 2002 Farm Bill changes, the **program doesn't match who needs it in 2005** – primarily the working poor with unstable income.

Priority Improvements

- ◆ Peg benefits to a more reasonable food purchase plan, not Thrifty Food Plan
- ◆ Raise the eligibility limit – 135% excludes many poor families
- ◆ Eliminate the asset and vehicle limits
- ◆ Protect current Categorical Eligibility as used in many states, including WA
- ◆ Fully restore immigrant and refugee Food Stamps – no waiting period
- ◆ Medical deduction for all; Establish standard medical deduction as alternative to verifying expenses
- ◆ Continue error rate reform
- ◆ Categorical Eligibility for seniors on SSI/make CAP programs nationwide
- ◆ Extend waiver period for counting EITC against Food Stamp income
- ◆ Develop simplification models based on current use of Farm Bill options like simplified reporting and sell these to the states
- ◆ Raise dependent care deduction
- ◆ Exclude the income of anyone 18 years or younger
- ◆ Increase administrative funding
- ◆ Provide states with infrastructure funding – computer systems, handheld devices for farmers markets, etc.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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DOI: 10.1002/jbm.b.10768

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